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BIRD SURVEYS OF THE OLD ROAD PHASE III ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT STUDY AREA, NEAR VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA, 2006

Prepared by:

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Nature and Scope of Surveys

During the spring and early summer of 2006 surveys were conducted along a section of The Old Road extending roughly from just south of the Santa Clara river northwards to Castaic Junction (see Figure 1). Surveys were focused on determining total avifauna, with special emphasis on presence or absence Species of Concern and Endangered Species. Surveys followed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Survey Protocols for least Bell's Vireo, which is known to nest adjacent to the study area. Numbers of all species observed were noted, and, in addition to the three species noted above, special attention was placed on locating species considered rare and endangered or of Special Concern, and on determining numbers of brown-headed cowbirds.

Each survey was conducted on foot by observers well acquainted with visual, auditory and behavioral characteristics of southern California birds. Survey routes were designed to cover all areas of riparian habitat, with emphasis placed on wetter habitats where least Bell's vireos and other sensitive riparian species are most likely to occur. All surveys occurred between 6:00 and 10:00 a.m. If focus species (yellow-billed cuckoo, least Bell's vireo, and southwestern willow flycatcher), were not visually observed, tapes of their calls were played in an attempt to elicit a response. Personnel for all surveys were Daniel A. Guthrie and/or Judith A. Sugden, both working under Federal Fish and Wildlife Service Permit number TE810394-2, issued under section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act and under an MOU from State of California Department of Fish and Game, dated April 23, 2003.

Habitat Condition and Bird Observations.

The survey area consists mostly of heavily disturbed ruderal lands along The Old Road. Planted trees occur at Castaic Junction and a small section of Rye Canyon Road. A small section of the riparian zone along the Santa Clara River is also included. This zone consists of two major habitat types, a wet riparian zone and a dry riparian woodland. The wet riparian zone consists of obligatory wet plants such as cattail and watercress found in continually moist soils along the active river channel and some willow, tamarisk

and *Baccharis* shrubs also found in this zone. This zone undergoes regular scouring in the winter which removes most annual vegetation and, depending on the severity of the flooding, some of the larger plants. The wet riparian annual plants gradually repopulate the riparian zone, usually becoming completely established by July. The dry riparian zone consists of larger trees and shrubs further back from the active river which obtain moisture through their deep root system. This zone is well developed on the north side of the Santa Clara River immediately west of The Old Road.

Observations of all birds are shown in Table 1. The numbers shown are of birds seen and heard, with heard individuals forming the majority of the observations. Numbers vary between censuses. Bird activity varies with season. Different species breed at different times of the year. In general, species are most easily observed when they are actively defending territories by song during the establishment of breeding pairs. Once pairs are established and nesting begins song often decreases and the numbers of birds observed, therefore, also decreases. After young leave the nest, numbers observed may increase. Thus, for most resident species, numbers of adult birds are most accurately censused in April and May, when territorial activity is at a maximum. A few species such as Anna's hummingbird that nest early in the season may be underestimated. Many species that nest in the area also migrate through the area to more northern portions of their ranges. Thus, numbers of nesting species observed in May, which include migratory birds passing through the area, do not give an accurate count of actual resident birds.

Comments on Threatened and Endangered Species

Yellow-billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus)

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is listed as a State Endangered Species. Despite playing taped calls of this species during June and July surveys, no individuals of this species were observed in 2006.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Empidonax traillii extimus)

This subspecies is listed as Federally Endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Willow flycatchers were once widespread in wet riparian woodland in southern California but now fewer than 70 pair remain, with the major concentrations being along the Kern River and the Santa Margarita River in San Diego County. Following the Revised Protocol (Fish and Wildlife Service, July 2000) five surveys (see table 1 for dates) were conducted specifically for southwestern willow flycatcher. All surveys occurred between 6:00 and 10:00 am. and used taped calls to elicit a response if flycatchers were not first observed.

A single willow flycatcher was observed on May 5th on the north bank of the Santa Clara river approximately 100 yards downstream from the Old Road bridge (Figure 1). Despite careful searches and the use of taped calls on subsequent visits, the bird could not be relocated. The willow flycatcher was not singing and was most likely a migrant of the more northerly subspecies. Willow flycatchers are fairly common migrants through southern California and most of the migrants are believed to be of the more northern common subspecies of willow flycatcher, *E. t. brewsteri*, which breeds throughout southern Canada and the northern United States, rather than representatives of the southwestern subspecies *E. t. extimus*. Southwestern willow flycatchers are positively identified primarily by nesting within the geographic area of their range or by measurements of in hand specimens.

The form required for reporting willow flycatcher sightings to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are attached.

Least Bell's Vireo (Vireo bellii pusillus)

Surveys of the wet riparian areas followed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidelines for least Bell's vireo. Eight surveys were conducted between April 10 and July 31 (see Table 1 for dates). All surveys occurred between 6:00 and 10:00 am. The least Bell's vireo is a very vocal species and most birds are located without the use of taped calls. However, tapes were used to elicit responses in early spring, before vireo arrival, in late summer, when vireos were less vocal, and in areas of marginal habitat or where vireos were expected from previous sightings but could not be heard.

A pair of least Bell's vireos were regularly observed in the willow thicket along the Santa Clara river immediately adjacent to a point where a stream enters the river from the east (Figure 1). Least Bell's vireo has also nested at this location in previous years.

Comments on Sensitive Species

Great Egret (Ardea alba)

The great egret is listed on the California Natural Diversity Data Base as a species that warrants monitoring. Individuals of this species was observed sparingly along the river and probably represent non-breeding individuals. No evidence of nesting was observed.

White-tailed Kite (Elanus leucurus)

This species, formerly the black-shouldered kite, is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. A pair of kites nested in the dry riparian forest immediately downstream from the Old Road (Figure 1).

Cooper's Hawk (Accipiter cooperii)

Cooper's hawk is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. Cooper's hawks are resident along the Santa Clara River and one was observed on April 20th just above the Interstate 5 bridge. No evidence of nesting was observed.

Yellow Warbler (Dendroica petechia)

The yellow warbler is considered a Species of Special Concern by the State of California. Yellow warblers prefer wet riparian habitat but are also found in large cottonwoods in drier riparian areas. Small numbers of yellow warblers were observed throughout our surveys and probably nested. The larger numbers observed in early May were mostly migrants passing through the area.

Tricolored Blackbird (Agelaius tricolor)

This species is considered a California Special Concern species by the Department of Fish and Game. A single birds was observed on May 5th and was probably a migrant passing through the area.

Comments of Brown-headed Cowbirds

Although not a Species of Concern, comments about this species are warranted due to its influence on several endangered species. Cowbird traps were operated during the summers of 2003 and 2004 just north of the Valencia Wastewater outfall. This may account for the very small numbers of this species observed in 2006.

Summary

A single willow flycatcher was observed once, which was probably a migrant belonging to the northern subspecies (Empidonax traillii brewsteri) rather than to the southern California endangered subspecies E. t. extimus. A pair of least Bell's vireos nested in a willow thicket on the east side of the Santa Clara River adjacent to agricultural fields. Two Species of Concern, white-tailed kite and yellow warbler were observed throughout the survey period and are believed to have nested. Three additional Species of Concern, great egret, Cooper's hawk and tricolored blackbird were each observed once and believed to be either migrating through the area or, in the case of Cooper's hawk., visiting from areas adjacent to the study site.

Figure 1. Boundary of The Old Road Phase III Environmental Project Study, showing location of Sensitive species.

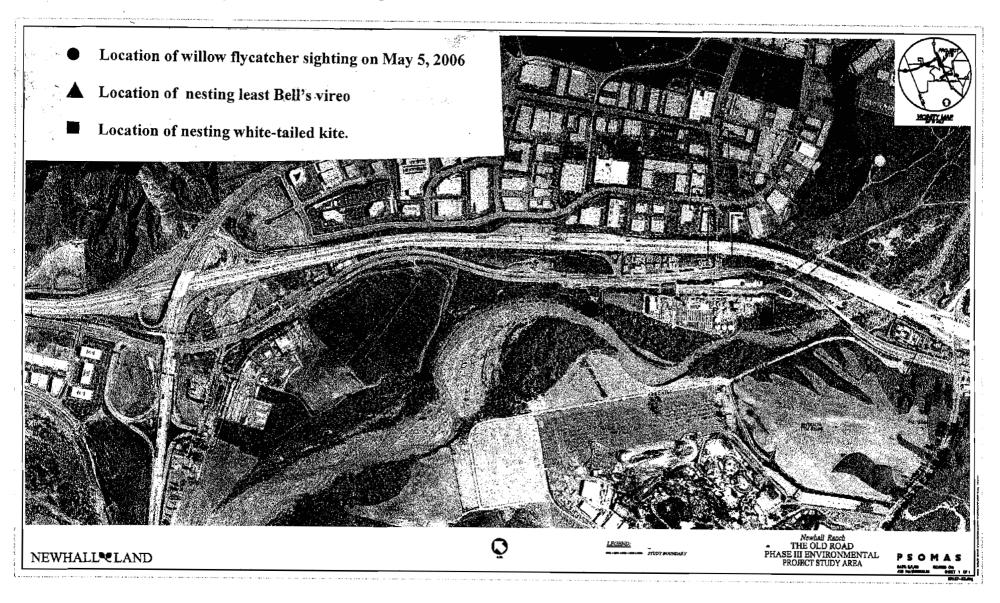


Table 1. Bird Observation during 2006.	s along	the Old	u Road	iii tue	AICIUIT	y Or the	s Santa	Ciara	Vivei.
during 2000.		 -							-
Endangered Species and	Species	of Co	ncern i	n bold					
	Ţ			Dates	of Sur	veys			
SPECIES	STAT.	4/20	<u>5/5</u>	5/17	5/28	6/8	6/23	7/2	7/12
Great Egret	m,w	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mallard	r	3	0	4	2	0	0	2	0
White-tailed Kite	r	3	2	1	1	1	0	0	2
Cooper's Hawk	r	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	r	0	2	1	0	4	2	2	2
Red-tailed Hawk	r	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
American Kestrel	r	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
California Quail	r	3	2	3	4	4	4	6	4
Killdeer	r	3	4	4	2	5	4	17	0
Rock Dove	r	6	0	0	Ö	0	0	0	0
Mourning Dove	r	13	12	3	5	5	29	3	15
White-th. Swift	r	15	0	8	9	2	6	8	2
Anna's Hummingbird	r	4	3	5	3	0	3	2	4
Belted Kingfisher		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nuttali's Woodpecker	r	4	2	4	3	3	7	1	2
Downy Wodpecker	r	1	1	0	1	3	2	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	r	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0
Western Wood Pewee	S	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Willow Flycatcher	s	0	1	0	0		0	0	0
Black Phoebe	r	0	7	6	3	3	8	6	8
Ash-throated Flycatcher	s	3	4	5	4	4	5	4	6
Cassin's Kingbird	s	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
Western Kingbird	s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Bell's Vireo	s	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Warbling Vireo	m	0	1	0	0		0	0	0
Western Scrub Jay	Г	1	0	2	1				0
American Crow	r	8	7	 3	3	Ō	4	12	2
Common Raven	r	10	12	2	2	9		28	11
Tree Swallow			0	0					0
N. Rough-winged Swallow	S	27	7	12				40	22
Cliff Swallow	1 -	2	3	2	0	,		30	8
Barn Swallow	S	1	5	0	0	2			4
Dak Titmouse		0	2		0		4		0 .
Bushtit	r					2			0
อนรถแบ White-br. Nuthatch	ļ		0						0
vnite-br. Nuthaton Bewick's Wren		20	12	16	17	14	12		8 i
		4		21	10				0
House Wren			-					7	1
Nestern Bluebird				3 0		0			0
Wrentit	r			-					0
Northern Mockingbird		_	+				_	2	1
California Thrasher						!			1
European Starling				8					13
Cedar Waxwing			0						0
Orange-cr. Warbler		0 4	1 19	0 3		0 1	0	0 1	0

During 2006										
Endangered Species and	Species	of Co	ncern i							
	_				of Sur		ļ			
SPECIES	STAT.	4/20	<u>5/5</u>	<u>5/17</u>	<u>5/28</u>	<u>6/8</u>	6/23	7/2	7/12	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	w,m	2	5	0	0	0 -	0 -	0	0	
Black-th. Gray Warbler	m	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Common Yellowthroat	- '''	2	1	0	0	2	7	0	5	
Wilson's Warbler	m	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Western Tanager	m	0	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Spotted Towhee	r	8	11	5	6	3	5	8	5	
California Towhee	Г	15	8	11	8	9	10	6	10	
Song Sparrow	r	30	18	18	15	24	26	17	7	
Black-headed Grosbeak	s	2	4	3	3	7	3	3	2	
Blue Grosbeak	s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Red-winged Blackbird	s	0	1	7	0	8	0	Ō	Ō	
Tri-colored Blackbird	w,m	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Brewer's Blackbird	r	6	6	0	10	0	0	1	0	
Brown-headed Cowbird	s	2	5	4	5	3	0	0	0	
Hooded Oriole	s	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Bullock's Oriole	s	1	0	3	2	0	1	0	2	
House Finch	r	18	15	22	30	18		26	36	
Lesser Goldfinch	r	2	12	3	5	5	2	2	3	
House Sparrow	r	8	0	0	12	6	8	14	8	
Status: m, migrant; r, reside	nt: s. sur	nmer o	<u>nly: w. i</u>	winter						
numbers in parentheses are										

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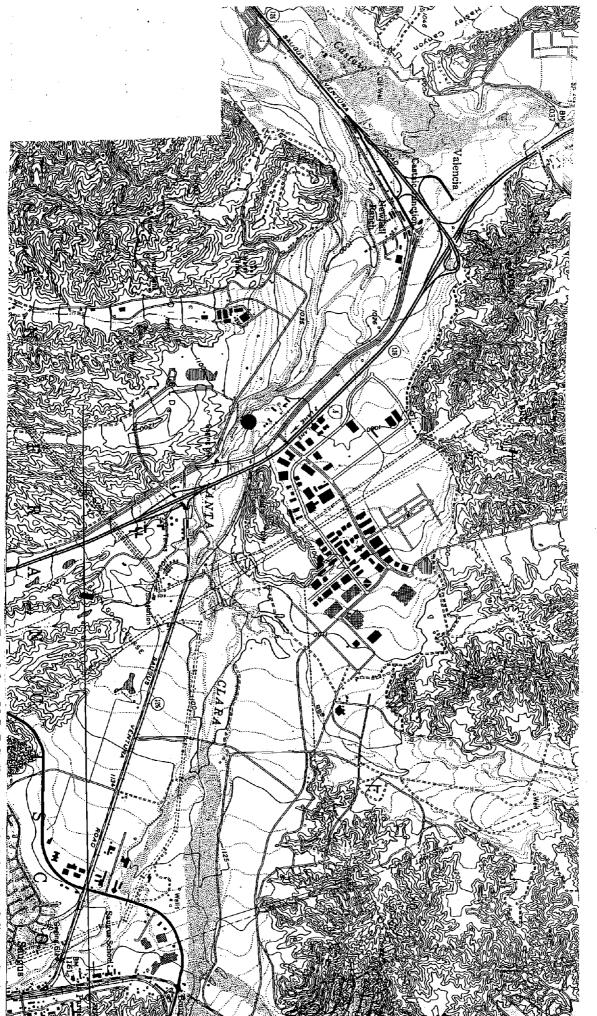
Willow Flycatcher Survey and Detection Form (rev. 4/98) 2006

	ved in previous y e name was used Angeles			~ .		unta Clara Ri		Newhall	
Is cop Site Coordinate	ny of USGS map	p marked wa 34 25.10	ith survey a	rea and WI	FL sighti 118 34.50	ings attached	d (as require UTM	d)? X□ Yes □ No	
Elevation	Stop: N 1000 - 1125 ft.	34 25.172_	feet	w	118 38.0	70	UTM	Zone	
-							this page *		
Survey#	Date (m/d/y)	Number	Estimated	Estimated	Nest(s)	Cowbirds	Presence of	Comments about this survey	
Observer(s)	Survey time	of WIFLs Found	Number of Pairs	Number of Territories	Found? Y or N	Detected? Y or N	Livestock, Recent sign Y or N	(e.g., evidence of pairs or breeding, number of nests, nest contents or number of fledges seen; potential threats)	
	Date 5/5	1	0	0	N	Y	n	Non-singing	
_J_Sugden	start 6:30								
	stop 9:30			}					
	total hrs _3_						1		
J. Sugden	Date 5/17	0	0	0	n	Y	Ň		
	Start 6:30		}						
	Stop 9:30								
	total hrs _3								
_J.Sugden	Date 5/28	0	0	0	n	Y	N .		
	Start 6:30								
	Stop 9:30								
	total hrs _3								
	Date 6/8	0	0	0	n	Y	N		
J. Sugden	start 6:30								
	stop 9:30								
	total hrs 3_	•							
_J. Sugden	Date 6/23	0	0	0	n	Y	N		
	start 5:30								
	stop 8:30					Í			
	total hrs 3.0								
Overall Site Summary (Total only resident WIFLs) Total survey hrs_21 See over for additional surveys		Adults	Pairs	Territories	Nests	Were any WIFLs color-banded? No			
		0	0	0	0	If yes, report on back of for	on(s) in the comments section		

Submit the original of this form. Retain a copy for your records.

Fill in the following information completely. Submit original form. Retain copy for your records.

Name of R	eporting Individual _	Dan Guthrie_		Phone #	_909 607 2836
Affiliation	_Claremont College	es	Email	dguthrie@js	d.claremont.edu
Did you ve This is a	rify that this site nam	ne is consistent was ously lumped as a	Boquet River Bridgeith that used in previous upper Santa Clara River, ne):		No ? (circle one)
Federal 1	Municipal/County	State Tribal	<u>Private</u>		
Name of M	lanagement Entity or	Owner (e.g., Tor	tto National Forest) _Ne	whall Land C	
Length of a	rea surveyed: _5.9 m	iles(specif	fy units, e.g., miles = mi	, kilometers =	km, meters = m)
Did you su	rvey the same genera	l area during each	visit to this site this year	ar? Yes/	If no, summarize in comments below.
If site was s	surveyed last year, di	d you survey the	same general area this y	ear? Yes/	If no, summarize in comments below.
	Characteristics: Over Native broadleaf plant		es in tree/shrub layer at t	his site comp	rised predominantly of (check one):
Х,	X□ Mixed native an (entirely or almost e		mostly native) high-elevation willow)		
	Mixed native and ex	kotic plants (most	ly exotic)	Exotic/intro	oduced plants (entirely or almost entirely)
Identify the	2-3 predominant tree	e/shrub species: _	_Cottonwood, willow, t	amarisk	
Average he	ight of canopy:40	ft	(sp	ecify units)	
	e water or saturated some the site to surface			(specify units))
			among visits (did the site ater present except for 5		out)? No (circle one) trickle in center of section.
location of v survey route	WIFL detections. You in relation to patch,	ou may also include and location of a	de a sketch or aerial pho	tograph show willow flyca	f the survey area, noting the survey site and ring details of site location, patch shape, ttcher nests detected. Such sketches or
Comments (attach additional she	ets if necessary):			
Sar plants.	ita Clara River flows	discontinuously	along this section of the	river. Water	is provided by two sewage treatment
11 11 12 12 12 12				2 with no sigl	htings.



Base Map: U.S.G.S. Topographic Map, 7.5 Minute Series Newhall Quadrangle, 1952, Photoreviesed, 1988